

# South Dakota National Guard

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Military youth learn Army values at leadership camp**

By Sgt. Mark VanGerpen  
SDNG Service Member & Family Support

RAPID CITY, S.D. – One hundred twenty military youth and 12 junior counselors from across South Dakota came together for the 2014 South Dakota National Guard Military Youth Camp, July 21-25, at Storm Mountain Retreat Center near Rapid City.

Targeted specifically toward youth ages 9-11 who come from military families, the camp offered kids a chance to learn military values and leadership, while connecting with others like themselves.

“This week is for kids from military families to be able to get together and relate with one another, and almost use each other as an outlet when something’s going on in their life that other people can’t really relate with,” said Caitlin Oster, 18, one of the camp’s junior counselors from Rapid City. “They get to have a lot of fun this week and maybe get their mind off something that’s going on at home, or just hang out with other kids that are like them.”

The camp’s theme was Star Search!, so campers spent a lot of time learning about space, stars and the constellations at the secluded campground.

They also learned the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

On top of that, they experienced leadership challenges and nature hikes, visited the Veteran’s Home in Hot Springs, swam at Evan’s Plunge and sang military cadences on stage at the Mount Rushmore lighting ceremony.

Zack Torrez, 11, of Spearfish, is a first-year camper who said the camp’s packed schedule kept him busy, but in a good way.

“It’s a lot of fun,” he said. “We do a bunch of fun stuff, like our cadences and our youth camp song. They make you work a little. Not as bad as the military, though.”

When asked what they had learned at camp, Torrez enthusiastically launched into his favorite cadence “Down by the River” while Levi Langloss, 10, a second-year camper from Crooks, S.D., sang the responses.

The two campers then got into in a spirited debate over which slides at Evan’s Plunge were the most exciting.

Overall, the camp offers a host of opportunities that some of the campers find hard to come by. Sadie Schmitt, 11, a third-year camper from Dell Rapids, S.D., appreciated the camp's wide variety of events because they were the kind of things she doesn't get to do very often.

"Since I live five and a half hours away, I don't get to come up here every day and go to Evan's Plunge or Mount Rushmore or anything, so it's nice to get to do that kind of stuff," she said.

Schmitt was also privileged enough to sleep in the big cabin, which Torrez said was much nicer than his.

"It's kind of unfair for the girls, because the girls have these big luxury houses, and the men are down in small cabins," he said. "It's like, men need some respect here, too. Come on."

At the end of the day, though, the campers were happy about what they'd been able to do, and all said they were going to miss the people they'd met there.

"You get to meet a lot of new people," Oster said. "Being surrounded by all the people who are like me, who go through the same things that I do, and can talk about the same things that I can ... you're able to relate to each other in a different way than you do with your friends at school."

The next camp, Explore!, is set for Aug. 11-15 and is designed for military youth in the 12-14 age group. The campers will be able to pursue one of four military tracks (aviation, law enforcement, survival skills and medical) while also learning about Army values and leadership qualities.

South Dakota Military Youth Leadership Camps are conducted in partnership with the South Dakota National Guard Child and Youth Program and Operation Military Kids, a Department of Defense grant-funded program.

To get involved with either camp, contact Taryn Broomfield, South Dakota National Guard Lead Child and Youth Program Coordinator, at (605) 737-6019 or [taryn.m.broomfield.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:taryn.m.broomfield.ctr@mail.mil).

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard)



**140722-Z-LN227-023:** Members of the South Dakota National Guard Military Youth Camp's orange "Integrity" team hold tight while trying to get 20 campers' feet on a small wooden platform at the youth camp Star Search!, July 22, 2014, near Rapid City, S.D. The challenge was a part of a leadership and teamwork course that tested the group's cooperation and ability to think outside the box. The camp attracted about 120 youth from military families across South Dakota, giving them a chance to meet and share experiences with other children who face the unique challenges of being part of a military family. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark VanGerpen/Released)



**140722-Z-LN227-048:** Members of the South Dakota National Guard Military Youth Camp's orange "Integrity" team work on lining up on a log in order of their birthdays, while only letting one foot touch the ground during the youth camp Star Search!, July 22, 2014, near Rapid City, S.D. The challenge was a part of a leadership and teamwork course that tested the group's cooperation and ability to think outside the box. The camp attracted about 120 youth from military families across South Dakota, giving them a chance to meet and share experiences with other children who face the unique challenges of being part of a military family. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark VanGerpen/Released)



**140723-Z-LN227-010:** Blue “Respect” team campers at the South Dakota National Guard Military Youth Camp, Star Search!, check out Mount Rushmore through telescopes, July 23, 2014. The visit to Mount Rushmore was part of the busy itinerary at the youth camp, which lasted four days and taught campers the Army values and leadership qualities. The youth camp provides the youth of South Dakota’s military families the opportunity to share the experiences and unique challenges of being a military child. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark VanGerpen/Released)



**140723-Z-LN227-019:** All 120 campers of the South Dakota Military Youth Camp, Star Search!, perform their team cadences at Monnt Rushmore National Memorial, July 23, 2014. The visit to Mount Rushmore was part of the busy itinerary at the youth camp, which lasted four days and taught campers the Army values and leadership qualities. The youth camp provides the youth of South Dakota’s military families the opportunity to share the experiences and unique challenges of being a military child. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Mark VanGerpen/Released)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail [ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil](mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil).